4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

Raman Menon, however, records a legend of a mother's brother who deliberately betrayed a nephew, whom he hated, to the vengeance of a lineage currently feuding with his own.[6] The nephew was to have been killed by his enemies on the following day. But in the night his mother prayed for the return of her son's elder brother who was absent in a distant land. The lineage ghosts miraculously brought home the brother in time to save his junior's life. It must be remembered, moreover, that the belief that the deceased himself would become a lineage ghost capable of wreaking vengeance probably formed a sanction against intralineage murder.

Women are excluded from the ancestral shrine during their pollutions and may not enter it on the day of propitiations. The former prohibition is related to the whole concept of bad sacredness associated with emissions of the body, which prevents women from touching or eating with others or entering any sacred place during their pollutions. That women should be totally excluded from the shrine on days of propitiation seems also to relate to the general position of women in the society. As in most of the higher Hindu castes, women traditionally played a very minor role in economic production, for the work of production was done by the lower castes. A few women were scholars, and a few were even trained in arms, but the Nāyars' occupation as soldiers in general tended to exclude women from work outside the home. The bearing of children was by far the chief value of women. Correspondingly, women were subordinates in the legal sphere. They were throughout life under the legal guardianship of men, might not take part in public deliberations, and might not act as witnesses in the village court. The legal subordination of women may have been partly connected with their comparative lack of value in economic production, and perhaps partly, with the great moral authority they derived from childbearing—for female procreation was very highly valued and male envy of these functions was overt. The cult of lineage ghosts supports the correct operation of male legal authority within the *taravād*. The exclusion of women from participation in it, and their exclusion from the shrine on days when their procreative functions were most apparent, perhaps expresses in a formal manner the notion that the power which women derived from these functions was polar and even antipathetic to the legal and economic power of men.

Although the lineage ghosts had only subsidiary judicial functions, their cult served in several ways indirectly to maintain right relationships within the *taravād*. First, a *kāranavan* who respected and correctly propitiated his own forebears provided a role model of piety for his juniors in their relations with living elders. Second, the ghosts, as we have seen, provided some sanctions against a *kāranavan's* ill treatment of his wards. Levy,[7] in connection with the Chinese ancestor cult, has pointed out the importance of having supernatural agents to whom a human authority owes deference, in social units where the authority is not chosen by his subordinates and cannot easily be manipulated or removed by them. For the authority's good behavior toward his subordinates then becomes a part of his sanctioned duty toward his own supernatural authorities. In the Chinese cult, which in this respect resembles the Brahman, the head of a family must care for his patrilineal descendants because it is part of his duty to the ancestors to provide happy and prosperous offspring. For these, by their own later ancestral offerings, will save the forebears' spirits, and his own, from suffering in the life after death. In the Nāyar case, the *kāranavan* must keep his *taravād* in good order because if he does not do so the lineage ghosts may inflict suffering on all, including himself.

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
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No clear distinction is made between alien ghosts and minor malevolent deities, or demons, which are also sometimes called *pretams* in Cochin. Some demons are found throughout Malabar. Chief of these is Kuttichāttan, a spirit capable of all kinds of poltergeist activities. Sometimes, on the advice of an astrologer, a *taravād* privately sets up a shrine to Kuttichāttan and arranges for his annual propitiation by a low caste person in the same manner as an alien ghost. Often, indeed, local myths of particular Kuttichāttans suggest that they have been derived from alien ghosts, whose legends became fancifully embroidered with miraculous elements. The story of one Kuttichāttan, in this case enshrined in a Nambūdiri Brahman garden and propitiated by a washerman, will illustrate this process. The god was said to have been born from a sacrificial fire during ancestral ceremonies in a Brahman house. The Brahman house-owner brought him up, and when he was adult sent him to graze cattle as a serf. One day the Brahman's red-horned bull was missing, and the serf admitted that he had killed and eaten it. The Brahman tied him to the rafters of the cowshed and had him beaten to the point of death. Afterwards, the serf turned into a Kuttichāttan and disappeared, but hovered above the Nambūdiri household bringing misfortune until a shrine was set up for him. Educated Nāyar informants surmised that the spirit had originally been that of an executed serf, later glorified by his propitiants as Kuttichāttan. Similarly, Kadangōtt Makkam, whose story was related above, is spoken of as a form of Bhagavadi in some *taravāds* where she is propitiated.

I have so far mentioned the kinds of alien ghosts which may be attached to individual *taravāds* in Cochin. In fact, however, cults of spirits and deities of the village are grander and more numerous in Cochin than are those of the *taravād*. This parallels the fact that the Cochin village was traditionally highly centralized as a unit of local government. In this area, the temple of the village goddess Bhagavadi is managed either by a Nāyar village headman's lineage or collectively by a village community of commoner Nāyars. Only the Nāyars and castes above them might traditionally enter the temple, but all castes owed allegiance to the deity and took part in her annual festival. The lowest castes of former serfs, and some other polluting castes such as washermen, took part in the festival through the medium of one or more minor malevolent deities or particularly important local ghosts which occupied small shrines at a distance from the main temple. Such spirits were thought of as servants of the goddess, and at her will could "sow the seeds" of smallpox or other misfortunes in the village. To avert such misfortune not only must the Nāyars and other high castes propitiate the goddess herself, but the lower castes must also assemble, bringing imitation bullocks and horses—the vehicles of the deity's demon servants—and make offerings to these demons. Selected persons from these lower castes became possessed by the village ghosts or demons and, in masked dances, made oracular pronouncements both to their own and the higher castes. During the festival, and for several weeks before it, Nāyar households must also entertain these shamans privately in the courtyards of their houses and make gifts of grain to them which warded off the demons' wrath.

In Kottayam, the village was traditionally less centralized. Each Nāyar *taravād* was an independent landowning body owing only tenuous allegiance to a chief. Cults of deities and ghosts associated with particular *taravāds* are therefore more prominent than are those of village temples, and it is in the former rather than the latter that ritual cooperation between high and low castes is most prominent. Whereas a Cochin

5:Mehra E-5 (no date) 1956 AWll Kerala AWll
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deity. Besides these, there are innumerable private snake shrines, particularly in pious households.

All diseases or misfortunes are due to the neglect of snakes. Leprosy, itches, sterility of women and deaths due to poison, are attributed to the anger of snake gods. The remedy for snake-bite lies in the propitiation of serpents through worship at the snake shrine. If no such shrine exists, then a diligent search is made and a 'snake stone' is dug up from the vicinity. Thereafter this accidental find of the snake stone is duly consecrated and worshipped, and all the erstwhile troubles are attributed to the inadvertent neglect of the sacred stone. The person dying of snake-bite is taboo, because his body is supposed to be occupied thereafter by the snake god, and it needs to be disposed of in a special manner with particular reverence and specific rituals.

Among the Nayars of South India snake worship assumes unique importance. It is popularly believed that in early times a Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmin brought the serpents with him and left them in their present abode. He however promised to return one day but never did. Strangely enough, in Travancore, a Pambakattu Nambutiri family still resides and is not permitted to enter the Manarsalil temple for fear that the snakes might leave the area and follow the brahmin to his abode. In a special ceremony called *havu muttam* or the shifting of the snake shrines from one place to another in the compound of the house—if accidentally the shrine is awkwardly situated in a plot of land where construction is to begin—the Pambakattu Nambutiri is called specially to do the necessary shifting ceremony. He purifies the new area and transfers the shrine to the newly consecrated spot, to the accompaniment of sacred incantations. Thereafter there is feasting and the brahmin is paid money and is presented with a set of new clothes. This is in striking coincidence with the legend of origin, and lends credence to the story of the origin of snake worship, particularly in Manarsalil temple in Quilon, as being connected with Pambakattu Nambutiri brahmins.

The plans of snake shrines have much in common, though some are small and some big. The Manarsalil temple

782 776 778 made periodically to the serpent gods in the kavoos. The one I am describing here is one of the most important in Travancore. This is known as Mannārsāla. 173 Once upon a time, so says tradition, a male member of this Illam married a girl of the Vettikkòttu Illam, where 776 the serpents were held in great veneration. The girl's 778 parents being poor could give her nothing in the way of dowry. They, therefore, gave her one of the stone idols 825 of the serpent, of which there were many in their house. This stone idol the girl was counselled to take care of and regularly worship; subsequently it is said the girl became a mother and brought forth a boy and a snake, whereupon the snake-child was located in the underground cellar of the house and brought up. The Illam prospered from that day. The woman and the snake are believed to be the cause of the affluence of the family, and to this day to the surname of the male members of that Illom are added, by way of distinction, the names of the serpent god and that of the female. [115] Thus my informant, the present head of the family, is called Vasaki Sridévi Krishnan Naınbyadi. To this gentleman I am indebted for the following further details on the snake-worship at Mannārsāla :—He says the name Mannārsāla means the 'unburnt ground.' This refers to an ancient tradition that when the great Khandavavanam was burnt by Agni, the god of fire, this small oasis was spared on the prayer of the serpents, who were the progeny of the serpent offspring of the lady of this Illam. As the Illam could not well accommodate the large number of the serpents that had multiplied, they were removed to a spot on the south of the house, where a magnificent grove has since been grown. In this spot are stone idols put up for the king and queen of snakes known as Nágarája and Nágayekshi, and for various members of the family which, according to my informant, number about 3,000. There are as many stone 778 images in this grove now. In the cellar of the house, as well as in the grove where the stone images are placed, 776 a solution of noorum palum is offered once a year, that 782 is, on the day following the Sivarátri in the month of Másí. The same kind of offering is made to the Chittrakoodom also. About 12½ Edangalies of dough and milk are mixed together and kept in the cellar. Thereafter the door of the cellar is shut for three days, and lest anybody pry into what passes within the cellar, the women of the household cover the crevices and holes of the door

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
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In the south-east of Malabar, in the neighbourhood of Palghat, the Ônam games are of a rougher character, the tenants of certain jenmis (landlords) turning out each under their own leader, and engaging in sham fights in which there is much rough play. Here, too, is to be seen a kind of boxing which would seem to be a relic of the days of the Roman pugiles using the cestus in combat. The position taken up by the combatants is much the same as that of the pugiles. The Romans were familiar with Malabar from about 30 B.C. to the decline of their power. We may safely assume that the "3,000 lbs. of pepper" which Alarie demanded as part of the ransom of Rome when he besieged the city in the fifth century, came from Malabar.*

Before ending this very incomplete account of customs of the Nâyars, mention must be made of two more of these, both odd. Ever since Châraman Perumal departed from the west coast of India in A.D. 825, setting sail for Arabia and Mecca, having divided up his kingdom, His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore when ascending his throne says: "I ascend the musnud, and will rule until my uncle returns." The "uncle" is Châraman Perumal, the last sovereign of the west coast, who, having embraced the Muhammadan religion which was brought to his shores by Arab traders, proceeded to carry out a wild idea—so goes the legend—of receiving instruction from the Prophet himself! He never returned. To one princeling was given the territory now known as Travancore, and his surviving successor (through the female line of course) is the present Maharajah of Travancore. To another he gave Cochin, the ruler of which State also inherits through the female line. To the ancestor of the Zamorin of Calicut the Perumal gave no territory, as to the others, but he gave him his sword (it is still in existence) with the advice "to die and kill and annex." That he annexed is quite clear, as he was the sovereign not only of Calicut but of the country round about when modern Europeans first visited the west coast of India. Like the Maharajah of Travancore, the Zamorin repeats the formula that he rules until his uncle returns, but in his case it forms part of an elaborate and costly ceremony. The fort, which was the official residence of the Zamorin,

* See Madras Government Museum Catalogue No. 2, Roman Coins, by Mr. Edgar Thurston, Superintendent of the Museum.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
AWll Kerala AWll
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[173] Origin and tradition of the caste.

According to *Kerala Mahatmyam*, the Nayars are said to be the descendants of the union of the junior members of the Nambuthiri families with the Devagandarva and Rakshasa women brought in by Parasurama from extra-terrestrial regions. The *Keralotpatti* regards them as the descendants of the Sudras who accompanied the Brahman immigrants from outside Kerala.

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Some consider that the Nayars came from Tibet where polyandry prevails, while others consider them to be a very early division of the Newars of Nepal. The mere existence of polyandry in Tibet is not sufficient to suggest a racial identity, nor is the form of polyandry prevailing amongst the Nayars the same as that found amongst the Tibetans; [1] but the marital relations, mode of inheritance and other customs, as well as the style of architecture of Nepal, closely connect them with the Nayars, and go to show a common origin. [2]

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In the serpent worship of the Nayars, and also their matriarchal customs, others have found traces of a Scythian origin. It is said that the Dravidian languages retain a more intimate connection with the Scythian or Turanean tongues. Philology also comes in to support this view. It is said that Tamil and its cognate tongues were founded upon the ancient Asura or Dravidian speech, and this is strongly confirmed by the fact that the language of the Brahuis, a tribe on the borders of Sind, has been found to be closely allied to them. "The Brahuis' language", says Dr. Caldwell, "enables us to trace the Dravidian race to the southern confines of Central Asia, and that this country was the home of the Nagas to which race apparently belonged the founders of the Dravidian kingdoms." It may therefore be safely concluded that the Dravidians of South India were of the same stock as the Nagas of the North, and to these tribes of Naga colonists belonged the original serpent worshipping Nayars.[3] "The name Dravidian Races," says Friedrich Ratzel, "fits only the Tamils, Telugus, and Canarese of Southern India, remoter kindred of the dark aboriginal population to whom Aryan population brought the religion of Brahma, a high civil order and of course the opportunity of extensive intermixture. The selection of the term is connected

1. The Evolution of Marriage, Letourneau, page 80.
2. The Sun and the Serpent, C. F. Oldham, page 158.
3. The Sun and the Serpent, Chapter VII, pages 162-165.

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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Nayar

upon with contempt. It must be noted that they live separately, having little or nothing in common with the other classes, and that the institution is dying a silent and natural death.

Songs.— There have been very many songs current among the Nayars even from a very remote period; and they are chiefly composed and sung in honour of deities, and are mostly prayers addressed to them. A translation of these is not here attempted, for they lose much of their beauty, but the following, however, are the most important of them :—

Bhadrakali Pattu :—These are songs which are sung in honour of Káli, and are supposed to have been composed by the Sudras of Palghat long before the Malayalam era. Certain dramatic songs also appear to have been composed about the same time, and refer to the deities on the hills as well as to the kings of the period. They are sung in towns and villages, between Anamala and Trichur in the east, and the Walayar forests on the other side. The ancient name of these localities was Cheranad, and it was the first place to be occupied by people, when Kerala was a marshy tract. As evidence of this, remains of houses are still to be seen at the foot of the hills. In a place of such historic importance were composed and sung these songs, which are so full of the ideas of the Vedanta and Yoga philosophies, and which give a clue to the nature of the people who once lived there. There is also another variety of songs referring to *Dárikavadham*, (murder of the demon Dárikan), and they are sung by a class of men called the *Kurippans*. There are also other old songs such as the *Sásta pittu* (songs in honour of Sásta).

Ganapati pattu (songs in honour of Ganapati) and serpent songs :—Among the old songs, those referring to agriculture, and composed during the third century of the Malayalam era, occupy a prominent place, and the agriculturists of the northern parts of the State even to-day follow the precepts laid down in these songs. But excepting, the song commemorating the deeds of *Meppayil Kunji Othenan*, the Robinhood of North Malabar, there are no songs which sing of the deeds of brave men.

The chief festivals.—(1). *Onam* :—This is an important national festival, which falls in the second half of August or the first half of September, and is celebrated in commemoration of Mahábali, an *Asura* king, whose reign is believed

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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184 come off, therefore, either in the latter part of Kumbham or in the former part of the next following month of Meenam according as the new moon in Kumbham occurs earlier or
796 later. The festival is said to be celebrated in commemora-
184 tion of the victory obtained by the local deity, Bhadrakali,
773 widely known by the local designation of Chittur Bhagavati,
776 in a battle fought with the Kongans, the people of what was known in ancient days as the 'Kongu Desam' comprising the localities included in the present British District of Coimbatore, and lying to the north and east of the Chittur Taluk. The final engagement was fought in the eastern out-skirts of the present town of Chittur, and in it the Kongu chief called in the old songs by the simple name of 'Kongan' was slain by the Goddess with her own hand. The place of engagement is now marked by a small extent of rocky surface, on which is cut the figure of the Bhagavati's sword with which Kongan's head was cut off. The rock also shows two holes nearly a foot in depth, and six inches in diameter. These holes are pointed out by old people as having been made by the hoofs of the fore-legs of the Kongan's mount, which is described as a magnificent buff-bull, when the animal jumped on to the rock in the excitement caused by the fall of its master from its back slain by the Goddess. The buff-bull was also slain on the spot. The whole of the Kongu army was completely routed, and all stampeded to their country in utter confusion. In the course of the battle a few men on the side of the Bhagavati were also killed or wounded, among whom were four important persons belonging to four ancient families in Chittur, who appear to have been the leaders of the local militia. The dead bodies of these four and the wounded were taken from the field of battle and carried to the town and handed over to the respective families, the procession being led by the Goddess, who afterwards commanded the people to celebrate the victory every year, and after
173 entering the temple disappeared into her image within. Tra-
796 dition speaks thus of the origin of the war. The wealth of the
184 'Kongu Desom' chiefly consisted of chillies, turmeric, coriander, cumin seed, mustard, areca nut, etc. These commodities
[439] used to be exported for sale, in return for paddy, from Kongu
[492] Desom to Chittur, Palghat, and other places in large quantities

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906) 1912
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laden on the backs of mules, asses, bullocks and buffaloes. 796
When once a large caravansary of Kongu laden with such com- 184
modities was passing through Chittur, the people of the four [439]
desams of Chittur, *viz.*, Chittur, Nallepilli, Tattamangalam, [492]
and Pattancheri, robbed the Kongans of all their animals and goods. The chief of Kongu, on receiving the information, naturally felt indignant, and despatched an ultimatum to the *Pramánakkars* of Chittur, demanding the surrender of the animals and the articles, failing which, it was said, he would overrun the four *desams*, destroy the houses, and kill all people even including women and children. On receiving the ultimatum, the people went to the temple of the Goddess, and there read the document before the image of the Goddess. It was so read by a member of the Chittedath house, in whose custody, it is said, the original document, written in a copper plate, is still preserved. The reading of the ultimatum, transcribed in a piece of cadjan, before the Bhagavati, is one of the essential functions performed on the night of the Kongapada festival every year, and it is always done by a member of the Chittedath family, who dresses himself up in the fashion of a Kongan and acts the part of the Kongu chief. When the document [776]
was read and the people prayed to their Goddess in one voice for protection, the Goddess commanded from within the temple that her 'children' need not fear and that when the Kongan took steps to enforce his ultimatum, she would protect them. On receiving no reply to the ultimatum, the Kongan mobilized his men and crossed the Walayar river, the northern boundary of the Chittur Taluk. The information about the crossing of the [314]
boundary was first carried to the Chitturians by the Izhuvans [273]
of the vicinity, who were up the palmyra trees early in the morning for the purpose of tapping for toddy, and they in a body climbed down the trees, and without removing their breast protecting leather straps, tapping knives, mallets and ladders, ran to the four *desams* all in excitement. In view [564]
of the above fact, the advance portion of the day procession of the Kongapada festival is even to this day made up of a number of persons, mostly of the Chetti caste, belonging to the four *desams*, dressed up in the full toddy-tapping kit of the Izhuvans. They do so every year in pursuance of religi- [782]
ous vows made by them for the attainment of particular

9:Iyer E-4, 5 (ca. 1902-1906)1912
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173 796 184 [782] objects, such as recovery from illness, success in litigation, birth of children, etc.

When the information of the crossing of the Walayar by the chief of Kongu was communicated to the people of the four *desams* by the Izhuvans, they repaired to the temple in excitement and consternation, when Lo! the temple gates opened of themselves and a beautiful female form dressed in full battle armour, brandishing a shining sword and shedding a resplendent divine light, suddenly emerged out of the image within and marched off direct to meet the advancing army of the Kongan, followed by all the brave men among the people. The battle was fought with the result already mentioned. This battle is enacted on the night of the Kongapada festival as one of its essential functions, accompanied by the beating of numerous Pariah drums, blowing of horns, racing of horses, torch-light processions, besides, of course, the usual mischief-making among the youngsters, but the elders generally control them and stop excesses. In the course of the sham fight, some act as the wounded, some even as the dead and fall down on the field of action. These dead and wounded are immediately taken up and carried by the youngsters to their supposed respective houses in the town accompanied with torch-lights, beating of drums, beating of breasts, and crying and weeping. No outsider is allowed to take part in this sacred function. If an outsider, being possessed with any sudden fit of enthusiasm, attempts to take part in this function, 'woe be to him.' This battle function takes place at about 10 o'clock in the night and lasts for two or three hours. At the end of it, the night procession of the festival begins from the battle-field and moves through the Nayar quarters to the temple, where it reaches just before day-break, when there is a display of fireworks. After day-break, the chief of the place or *Nddúvázhi* represented by the Chambath house, accompanied by the people, go to the Goddess' temple to offer prayers of love and gratitude to the Bhagavati. The festival is wound up by a performance on the following night called '*Devendra pallu*' in which all the "one hundred Nayars" [1] of Chittur are

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1. The Nayar community of Chittur is collectively called by the name of "Chittur Nooru Nayar." It shows that the original village organisation of Chittur consisted of one hundred Nayar houses or families. Although there is a considerable increase in the number of Nayar houses at present, the appellation 'Nooru Nayar' is still used.

10:Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

[Marayil Tarwad]

by which the Marayil tarwad was founded around 1830. The first partition *tarwad* split into two residential groups (Marayil and East Marayil), occurred in 1898, and the final partition of the property by individual members was in 1944.

In May 1956 the living members of the *tarwad* were grouped into ten different households (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J of the Diagram); the male members who are not included in these groups formed each household with wife and children. The relationships of these households show that the degree of familiarity is paralleled with the genealogical distance as well as geographical distance. According to my own observations, the following different stages of the matrilineal group consciousness were noticeable.

First, the strong coherence of matrilineal members, appear in the groups consisting of the members of A, B, and C, and that of D and E. The members of each group meet almost every day; their daily life gives an impression as if they were still carrying on the *tarwad* life. For example, when one household is visited by a guest, others are usually called to join the talking, and often enjoy tea and meals together. In fact, the households of each group are direct neighbours of each other.

Secondly, the group whose members have the same grand-grandmother (consisting of A-B-C and D-C together) is distinguished by the amount of contact of its members with each other, against other members. They meet at least two or three times a week. The third level of group consciousness appears in the group consisting of all descendants of the foundress, including both Marayil and East Marayil. If necessary, they visit each other; if they pass near a house of the group, they are ready to visit. The manner of speaking is a bit more formal than that of first and second groups. However this is distinguished as the ceremonial unit. Though they lost the function of the property group (Mudal Sambantham), they maintain strongly the function of the ceremonial group (Pula Sambantham); funerals, marriages and seasonal festivities are carried out by these members altogether. For this corporate unit, 32 (refer to the number of the Diagram) is acting as the head. This is indeed the last function which is left for the members of Marayil *tarwad*; it is the matrilineal lineage with the same history; all members clearly can trace their genealogical relations with each other.

Further than this range, there is no group consciousness, but these members of Marayil *tarwad* observe exogamy from those members of Mullasseri, another *tarwad*, from which Marayil had sprung. Though they cannot trace exact genealogical relationships, by the observation of exogamy, Mullasseri members are considered as matrilineal distant kin, sociologically different from other Nayars.

Disintegrating Process of Marayil Tarwad

Based on the information of the present members the Marayil was founded by Prabaty Amma (*1*). The process of the foundation of this *tarwad* is as follows:

10:Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1962 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

[Marayil Tarwad]

613 The story goes back to the early 19th century. Prabaty Amma who came to visit a
● 193 temple in Ernaklum, met a young Nayar man. Soon after they were fallen in love, and married. The name of this young man was Narayana Panikkar, who was a district officer in Palgat, and later became the *karanavan* of his *tarwad*. By the right of the *karanavan*, he took his wife to his *tarwad*.

613 Thirty years after their marriage, Narayana Panikkar died. According to the law of
193 the Nayar, his wife and children had to leave from his *tarwad* at the moment of his death.
591 Prabaty Amma accompanied with her children left his *tarwad*, but she did not return to
968 her natal *tarwad*, Mullasseri. Instead, she decided to reside in the house which had been built by her husband for her as a gift. She named this *tarwad* Marayil, thus she and her children became independent from Mullasseri *tarwad*. It was said in this time, her mother's *tarwad*, Mullasseri, was so full with her matrilineal kin, hence she preferred to reside in this new house with her sons and daughters. This house is at present occupied by E. group. At the establishment of this new *tarwad*, I think, she must have had some land, or managing rights in farming land, given by her natal *tarwad* or by her husband as a gift, but I failed to discover the economic basis on which this *tarwad* life had been carried on.

613 Thus established, the new *tarwad* grew bigger in the course of time. In 1898,
175 the increase of its members led to the first residential partition into two groups, as already stated. It was twenty years after the marriage of the granddaughter of Prabaty Amma, *12* and her daughter *29* who was born in 1888, was ten years old, and *39* is said to have been born in this *tarwad* around this year. From these data, it can be assumed that all members from *1* to *39* of Marayil *tarwad* lived in this *tarwad* building together. The situation of the members of this old *tarwad* before the partition in 1898 is as follows.

613 Married members of this *tarwad* mostly practiced "visiting marriage" (see
591 Diagram, the majority of male members were visiting husbands). Seventeen
593 out of twenty-three cases of marriages in the second and the third generations,
182 took a visiting form. Five cases who did not practice "visiging marriage" were
175 younger ones of the third generation, whose ages are almost equal to those of the older members of the fourth generation. In the fourth generation, the cases of the visiting marriages decreased to four out of nineteen cases. These facts reveal that the residential pattern became more neolocal than duolocal during the fourth generation: by this time many had already established independent households in which they lived with their wife and children, having an independent income. These members are shown by ▲ in the Diagram.

A more careful examination of this Diagram, reveals that this tendency had already started in the third generation, as appeared in the case of the husband of *12*, Nando Pillai. He had used to visit his wife for twenty years after his marriage. He was a brilliant and successful man who had an important post in the palace of the Cochin Maharaja, which allowed him to accumulate considerable wealth. He made a new *tarwad* building for his sisters as their *karanavan*, and again in 1898 he built a new beautiful *tarwad* with a big garden, where he himself lived with his wife and children, thus making his wife independent from her *tarwad*. This house is at present occupied by the C group.

613 Then Marayil *tarwad* already suffering from over population, stimulated
591 by this event, split into two groups: one was the *tawari* of eldest daughter of
175 Prabaty Amma, another was that of the second and third daughters. The latter
182

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

thorns and planted with big-leaved plantains, flowering bushes such as the hibiscus, and tall, slender arecanut palms, their graceful, shining trunks entwined with betel and pepper creepers. Here and there, a red tiled roof denotes the dwelling of some high-caste person, while elsewhere, the thatched roofs of the ordinary houses reveal the low social status of the majority.

Red laterite dust roads criss-cross this green scenery, highways and lesser paths upon which a continual stream of men and women, scantily clad in white, are forever on the move. Dry river beds in the spring and swollen, muddy torrents in the monsoon season, are crossed together with the broad expanse of calm, smooth backwaters on the way east to the inland red laterite hills. It is here that the majority of the terraced paddy fields are met with, green and flooded in the summer and dried up, with tufts of yellow straw stalks the rest of the year, their fringes strewn with rustling, restless coconut trees.

2. MYTHOLOGICAL BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Hindu Brahmin tradition has it, so I heard from my informants in this region, that Kerala (*Malayalam* or *Keralabhumi* as it is called in the *Keralolpatti* and *Kerala Mahatmyam* chronicles) was created from the sea by Parasu Raman, the axe-wielding avatar of the god Vishnu, and given to those Brahmins called Nambudri for their perpetual possession and enjoyment. The myth, to which even the modern Hindu inhabitants of Kerala subscribe, is no doubt symbolic of two things: the geological origin of the land at the foot of the Ghats, which appears really to have been uncovered from the sea in some ancient natural upheaval, and the colonization of Kerala by Aryan invaders from the north in a remote and ill-defined past.

The mythological tale, in detail, is that Parasu Raman was once ordered by his father to kill his mother, because the latter had been seen by her husband smiling at a youth when she was fetching water at the well. The son, in filial obedience to his father, carried out the order, but having done so, attempted in every possible way to atone for the abominable crime of matricide. He consulted Brahmins who requested of him that he exterminate twenty two generations of the rival warrior caste of Kshattryas. This he did, but the Brahmins were not satisfied. Parasu Raman then climbed the Western Ghats and, from the highest point, cast his axe into the sea calling upon it to withdraw, which it did. The land of Kerala thus came into existence and Vishnu's avatar, the

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11

sage of Malabar, gave it to the priestly caste of Brahmins in perpetual holding.

These Brahmins now declared themselves satisfied and moved to take it over, but were at first frightened away by the aboriginal *Naga* (serpent) worshippers. Other Brahmins were then brought in from the north and instructed by Parasu Raman to propitiate the serpents by installing them as their household gods. He also organized the priestly settlers into sixty four villages (*gramams*) and directed them to adopt succession through the mother (*marumakkathayam*), which last injunction they disobeyed with the single exception of Payyanur in Chirakkal, where Brahmins observe matrilineal descent to this day. He then brought in Sudras (Nayars) from the country east of the Ghats (that is from the Tamil country) and entrusted them with the protection of the Brahmins; they were organized into *taras* and to them were given the duties of supervising, executing and issuing orders, so that rights in Kerala should not be curtailed or suffered to fall into disuse.

From this nebulous, mythical past, history later slowly emerges. Already, one thousand years B.C., Solomon is reputed to have traded with the south-west coast of India. Commercial contacts with the Near East did actually exist in this part of the sub-continent much earlier than anywhere else in India, the sea acting as a medium of communication. With the discovery of the south-west trade winds by Hippalus in the 1st century A.D., the Romans carried on the profitable relation, and they are reputed to have even had a settlement at Cranganore in Travancore. In 52 A.D., St Thomas landed there, according to local tradition, and converted some Brahmin families to Christianity, thus laying the foundation of the present-day Malabar Christian communities. During the following decades, as a result of the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem by the Emperor Titus in 70 A.D., the first Jews are reputed to have arrived in Kerala to settle at Mattancheri in Cochin.

In the 3rd century A.D., the Brahmins called in a king to rule them and the Perumal dynasty started with Keya Perumal, who came from Keyapuram, east of the Ghats. Trade with other parts of the world continued during this period, the Arabs arriving from the Hadramaut and the Persian Gulf in the 9th century. The Chinese, however, are said by Marco Polo to have been in full control of the Malabar ports when that great traveller visited the area in the 13th century. Shortly afterwards, the last of the Perumals, Cheruman Perumal, was converted to Islam and departed to Mecca never to return.

Before leaving, Cheruman Perumal put his kingdom in order, it

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AWll Kerala AWll

who do still live matrimonially in this way. From a certain Musad (low-caste Nambudri Brahmin practising surgery) whom I met in Shoranur and who was introduced to me as someone well informed because, owing to his profession, he had access where others could not go, I heard that in the very closed Court circles of Cochin and Travancore polyandry of the old type is still practised by Nayar ladies, who consort with wealthy Tamil Brahmins and Pillais from the east coast. It would naturally have been far beyond the bounds of possibility for me personally to investigate the truthfulness of this allegation, and therefore it can only be given here for what it is worth.

Thandans and Tiyas (Thiyyas) of north Cochin practise polyandry of the fraternal type, and none other. They are *makkathayam*, and a regular wedding ceremony is usual in their case. Cross-cousin marriage, in which a woman marries her father's sister's son, her *machchunan* and all his brothers, is preferred if not compulsory. The ceremony is performed at the bride's house, after the preliminary exchange of bride-price and dowry have taken place between the two families involved, and consists of the girl and her bridegrooms being seated in a row and fed ritually on *kanji* (rice porridge) and coconut milk. The honeymoon of the newly wed also takes place at the home of the wife, her husbands going to her either each in turn or in a body. Later residence of the family is patrilocal.

Most Thandans and Tiyas of central Kerala used to be toddy tappers, as I have mentioned earlier (p. 172). This occupation, they say, they brought from Ceylon, from where they are reputed to have originated; they also profess to have brought from there the coconut palm tree and the practice of fraternal polyandry. The tradition is closely linked to that of the Kammalans whom I shall describe next, and there does seem to be some evidence of close ties with the great island to the south. To this day, many Thandans and Tiyas emigrate temporarily to Ceylon as labourers, and it is said, although the etymology may be fanciful as some authors insist, that Tiya is derived from *dvipa*, "island" in Sanskrit.

I found Thandan and Tiya polyandry quite active still in Walluvanad and in north Cochin. I had been led to believe that it was fast dying out and that only very few practised it any longer. But this was not my impression, especially in the taluk of south Malabar. In north Cochin, a recent enactment known as Act XVII of 1115 The Cochin Makkathayam Thiyya Act of 1940, had made polyandry illegal in future, and it is true that nine years after the coming into existence of the new legislation, only the older people still practised the ancient form of marriage.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

The polyandry of the Kammalans, of the four sub-castes of goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters and bell-metal smiths, is in every way identical with that of the Thandans and Tiyas of the central area. This may be because they claim a common Sinhalese origin for it. The legend relates that one of the early Perumal kings of Kerala, having received some useful hints as to how to have his washing done by a *dhobi* (washerman) promised to give him a girl of the Asari (carpenter) caste in marriage. This revolted the Kammalans, and in order to avoid the degrading proposition, they emigrated in a body to Ceylon, leaving their king with none but a few workmen specialized in making roofs for the temples. The pre-historic boycott had its desired effect. The Perumal monarch, in dire distress, promised to give up the marriage he had had in mind and appealed to the king of Ceylon for the return of his indispensable artisans. These agreed to come back, but were given protection by the king of Sinhala in the form of an escort of his own subjects who brought the coconut with them, settled in Kerala and became the ancestors of the Tiyas. Presumably, the Kammalans learned the advantages of polyandry when they were in the kingdom of Kandy, and have never ceased to practise it since.

I found all the artisan families which I visited polyandrous, and I was told that the custom is still very vigorous, in spite of what outsiders have to say. The same applies to those associated craftsmen castes, the Kolla- and Vil-Kurups, the Tol-kollan, Kanisans, Mannans, Panans and Pulluvans, who do not seem either to have given up polyandry in any great numbers. Their form of the institution differs in no way from that of their fellows of the senior caste.

B. POLYANDRY IN THE WALLUVANAD TALUK OF SOUTH MALABAR AND IN NORTH COCHIN

Personal Observations

It was into this complex maze of Kerala society that I ventured, a few years ago now, to study the polyandry of some of its people. In the following pages, I give the results of this personal investigation. Thanks to my helpers and interpreters, I was able to find polyandrous households almost immediately. My first visit to the Palghat taluk and to Walluvanad allowed me to confirm that the Tiyas still practised what I was searching for, and that what I had heard about them was not incorrect. While in Tellicherry, I had the same experience, even though

101 occupation, are traders, artisans, oilmongers, palanquin-
174 bearers, and even barbers and washermen. The fact
564 seems to be that successive waves of immigration brought
[701] from the Canarese and Tamil countries different castes
[463] and different tribes; and these, settling down in the country, adopted the customs and manners, and assumed the caste names of the more respectable of the community that surrounded them. This process of assimilation
101 564 is going on even yet. Chettis of Coimbatore, for example, who settled in Palghāt and Valluvanād within living memory, have developed by this time into
[55] Nāyars. In the census schedules we find instances in which the males of a house affix the term Nāyar to their names, while the names of the females end in Chettichi. Gollas entering the country from the north have similarly, in course of time, assumed Nāyar customs and manners,
643 564 and are now styled Nāyars. Again the rājahs and chieftains of the country sometimes raised individuals or classes who had rendered them meritorious service to the rank of Nāyars. These men were thereafter styled Nāyars, but formed a separate sub-division with little or no communion with the rest of the Nāyar class, until at least, after the lapse of generations, when their origin was forgotten. Nāyar may thus at present be considered to be a term almost as wide and general as Sūdra."

173 564 According to the Brāhman tradition, the Nāyar caste is the result of union between the Nambūdris with Dēva, Gandharva and Rakshasa women introduced by Parasurāma; and this tradition embodies the undoubted fact that the caste by its practice of hypergamy has had a very large infusion of Aryan blood. In origin the Nāyars were probably a race of Dravidian immigrants, who were amongst the first invaders of Malabar, and as conquerors assumed the position of the governing and

13: Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date)
1909 AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

land-owning class. The large admixture of Aryan blood combined with the physical peculiarities of the country would go far to explain the very marked difference between the Nâyar of the present day and what may be considered the corresponding Dravidian races in the rest of the Presidency.*

In connection with the former position of the Nâyars as protectors of the State, it is noted by Mr. Logan† that "in Johnston's 'Relations of the most famous Kingdom in the world' (1611), there occurs the following quaintly written account of this protector guild. 'It is strange to see how ready the Souldiour of this country is at his Weapons: they are all gentile men, and tearmed Naires. At seven Years of Age they are put to School to learn the Use of their Weapons, where, to make them nimble and active, their Sinnewes and Joints are stretched by skilful Fellows, and annointed with the Oyle Sesamus [gingelly: *Sesamum indicum*]: By this annointing they become so light and nimble that they will winde and turn their Bodies as if they had no Bones, casting them forward, backward, high and low, even to the Astonishment of the Beholders. Their continual Delight is in their Weapon, perswading themselves that no Nation goeth beyond them in Skill and Dexterity.' And. Jonathan Duncan, who visited Malabar more than once as one of the Commissioners from Bengal in 1792–93, and afterwards as Governor of Bombay, after quoting the following lines from Mickle's Camoens, Book VII—

'Poliar the labouring lower clans are named:
By the proud Nayrs the noble rank is claimed;
The toils of culture and of art they scorn:
The shining faulchion brandish'd in the right—
Their left arm wields the target in the fight'—

* Gazetteer of the Malabar district. † Manual of the Malabar district.

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
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MALABAR DISTRICT.

GURUVAYUR (PONNANI TALUK).

[*By V. Lakshmana Aiyar, Christian College, Madras.*]

Preliminary.—Guruvayur is situated in the southern part of the Ponnani taluk, and is only 2 miles distant from the Arabian Sea. 361 It is close to the backwater which extends from the northern point of the taluk to Cochin and Travancore. To the east it is only 3 miles distant from the State of Cochin. It is 14 miles away from the capital town of the taluk through which flows the chief river of Malabar. No forests can be seen throughout the whole taluk. 133 The whole taluk is one red sandy mass with no waste lands, no mountains or hills. The chief crop of the village and perhaps of the whole taluk is coconut.

423 *Malabar land tenure.*—The system of land tenure that obtains in Malabar is entirely different from that of other districts. No doubt the theory that the Government is the legitimate owner of all the land in India and the people hold the land from the Government to which they pay a rent or tax, obtains its full significance here also. But there is an intermediary landlord, between the Government and the actual occupier of the land. How this intermediary landlord arose requires some explanation.

173 The origin of Malabar according to tradition is that a demi-god Parasurama reclaimed from the sea the portion of land extending from Gokarnam (Bombay) to Cape Comorin and from the Western Ghats to the sea. This demi-god having killed 21 times all the Kshatriyas, and having surrendered to Rama all his possessions after trial of battle, wanted a place to live in. He ordered the sea to recede and thus formed these lands. Malabar is a portion of that land. What historical facts are concealed in this tradition it is not easy to know but it may be guessed that in the general organizing of the Deccan, a certain number of Aryans * crossed the Western Ghats and reclaimed the lands from forest and wild beasts and made it habitable for civilized men. They may have dominated the original inhabitants by their superior civilization and Parasurama may have been the leader of that little band of Aryans. The tradition says that the demi-god gave all the lands he created to 64 Brahmans who became the leaders of the 64 villages into which the whole of the land was divided. These 64 Brahmans formed the original Malabar Brahmans or Nambudris, and they formed an assembly and decided matters of common concern. Individual villages decided their own matters and in every discussion of their affairs the Brahmana was the president and his opinion had perhaps the force of law. The whole village belonged to him and he was the Uralla or the chief man of the village. As time went on the one important family extended its branches and each branch had an equal voice in the affairs of the village. The one became many. I shall refer later to the remnants of this constitution of the village.

* [This hypothesis is ingenious, but not, in my opinion, probable.—Ed.]